



Canine Upper Respiratory Infection (URI)

Canine upper respiratory infection (URI) or “Kennel Cough” are two common terms for a respiratory infection caused by one or more viral or bacterial agents. URIs are very common in the shelter environment, as dogs usually come to us with an unknown medical/vaccination history and tend to be more stressed, lowering their immune system’s ability to fight off infections. We often send dogs with a URI to foster homes, so they can recover quicker in a less stressful environment.

URI Symptoms:

- Sneezing (more than a few times a day)
- Deep, sometimes hacking, dry cough
- Discharge from the eyes and nose
 - URIs can sometimes progress to heavy discharge, fever, and lack of appetite
- May become a bit lethargic and have a decreased appetite. Be aware that a complete lack of appetite and fever can lead to dehydration, which requires veterinary attention

Symptoms of a URI may last a few days to several weeks.

Is Canine URI Contagious?

A canine URI is not contagious to humans (or cats), although it can be transmitted from dog to dog through sneezing, coughing, or sharing toys/bowls. A URI can also be transmitted by your clothing, hands, shoes, etc., so it’s important to practice good hygiene and sanitization while handling fosters that are sick. Foster dogs with URI should remain isolated from any personal pets until they have been cleared by the medical staff. We also strongly recommend that you ensure your personal pets vaccines are up to date before fostering.

What Should I Do?

- Be sure to give any medications as directed!
 - If your meds are in a bottle, be sure to shake the bottle well before drawing up any medication
 - If you accidentally leave medications out of the fridge, contact the foster team for instructions on if it’s ok to continue to use or if it needs replaced.
- Keep your foster dogs noses and eyes clear of discharge by wiping with a warm, wet cloth multiple times a day. Humid air from a humidifier or hot shower can help to clear congested passages. AHS also may provide a nebulizer for severe cases of congestion.
- Sometimes, congestion or a sore throat may keep fosters from eating as well, but it’s important they get good nutrition to get better! Warming canned food for a few seconds in a microwave can help sick pets smell the food better and make it more enticing.
- Monitor for severe coughing- if your foster dog is coughing continuously, is unable to sleep because of coughing, or coughing so severely they spit up mucus/bile, please let the foster team know. They may need additional medication.
- Allow your foster dog to rest- much like when we have a cold, dogs with a URI need rest to get better! Keeping walks and play sessions shorter will help your foster dog to feel better quicker.
- Pay attention to how your foster dog is feeling towards the end of their medication course. If they are still exhibiting any URI symptoms, we may need to recheck or extend medications.